

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI  
EASTERN DIVISION

TRACEY WHITE, et al., )  
                          )  
Plaintiffs,            )  
                          )  
vs.                    )      Cause No. 14-cv-01490-HEA  
                          )  
THOMAS JACKSON, et al., )  
                          )  
Defendants.            )

VIDEO DEPOSITION OF JON BELMAR

Taken on behalf of the Plaintiffs

October 27, 2015

Reported by: Christine A. LePage, CCR #1000

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PLAINTIFF'S  
EXHIBIT

tables

19

1 A February of '10 through July of '13.

2 Q So how long have you been with the St. Louis  
3 County police department altogether?

4 A Twenty-nine years.

5 Q Is that your only law enforcement position?

6 A Yes, sir.

7 Q So I take it you started off as an officer and  
8 rose through the ranks to become chief?

9 A Yes, sir.

10 Q A success story if there ever was one?

11 A I've been blessed.

12 Q All right. How many men do you command?

13 A 850 sworn police officers, approximately 300  
14 professional staff, 1,100.

15 Q And my understanding, the little I have, of law  
16 enforcement in Missouri is that St. Louis County does not  
17 include the City of St. Louis; is that correct?

18 A It does not.

19 Q Okay. And the City of St. Louis is not even  
20 part of the county; is that right?

21 A No, they're their own county. They're the  
22 county of the City of St. Louis.

23 Q Okay. So they have a separate and distinct  
24 police chief?

25 A They do.

1 Q Oh, just about everybody?

2 A In one form or the other.

3 Q Okay. And where is headquarters located?

4 A It's located here at the County government  
5 complex in Clayton.

6 Q And can you give me an overview of the chain of  
7 command from you down?

8 A Well, actually, according to the County Charter,  
9 the Board of Police Commissioners is in charge of the  
10 St. Louis County police department, and in that role they  
11 appoint and retain the chief and they approve all the  
12 policies and general orders on the police department.  
13 They also have other duties, but they're my direct boss,  
14 and that is the Board of Police Commissioners appointed by  
15 the County Executive, and then they are approved or  
16 ratified by the County Council.

17 So I report to that member board, but I have  
18 operational control over the police department. Under me  
19 is the deputy chief, Chief Kenny Cox. I would like to  
20 point out, however, I did not have a deputy chief in  
21 August of 2014.

22 So in August of 2014, the way it would have  
23 looked is I would have had a lieutenant colonel in charge  
24 of patrol, a lieutenant colonel in charge of the Division  
25 of Criminal Investigation, a lieutenant colonel in charge

1 Patrol, Tom Jackson from the Ferguson police department, I  
2 believe Lieutenant Colonel Al Adkins.

3 Q When you say up there, where are you --

4 A I'm sorry, on West Florissant. So I'm answering  
5 your question the long way. So by this time the logistics  
6 are being primarily handled by St. Louis County, and you  
7 asked about the command, the command was myself, Tom  
8 Jackson, Al Adkins, and Ron Johnson.

9 Q Okay. Now, Adkins is with who?

10 A St. Louis Metropolitan police department.

11 Q And Johnson is with who?

12 A The highway patrol.

13 Q Okay. So those are the four main components?

14 A Yes, sir.

15 Q All right. So on the 11th, tell me about that  
16 day.

17 A So during the day on the 11th, I don't recall  
18 anything being all that remarkable during the daylight  
19 hours. On the evening of the 11th, I was up at the  
20 command post, it might have been 8:30 -- it was good and  
21 dark, so it was probably closer to 9:30, and I noted  
22 Mrs. McFadden responded, Mrs. McSpadden, I'm sorry,  
23 responded to the command post, because she wanted to  
24 meet -- I don't know if she wanted to talk to my  
25 detectives or what was going on, but I wanted to stay

1 nothing.

2 A So the date of the occurrence was 8/13.

3 Q Of '14, correct?

4 A Right. It was entered by Wolff on 2/20 and  
5 approved at 5/4. So you are correct. Thank you.

6 Q Okay. And this one is with regard to Nathan  
7 Burns --

8 MR. HUGHES: We've been going for a while. If  
9 you need a break, just say so.

10 THE WITNESS: I'm okay.

11 Q (by Mr. Lattimer) You sure? Do you need to  
12 take a call? I don't have a problem.

13 A No, I'm fine. Go ahead and finish this part and  
14 we'll break before we get to the next part.

15 Q Okay. And this one involves Mr. Nathan Burns?

16 A I'm sure you're accurate, because you were  
17 before, so --

18 Q Okay. So I just want to verify that the  
19 information contained in those reports with respect to the  
20 dates of their preparation is accurate.

21 A Yes, sir, they are.

22 Q Okay. And the reason that Detective Menzenwerth  
23 was given that task this year is what?

24 MR. HUGHES: Just object, it assumes facts not  
25 in evidence, you're saying he was given the task this

1 year, so that's why I'm objecting to it.

2 Q (by Mr. Lattimer) Okay, let me back up, let me  
3 back up, let's clarify that. I'm using this year as the  
4 date, because that's when the task was, according to the  
5 document, initiated.

6 A Yes, sir.

7 Q And in that regard, what I'm asking you is is  
8 the task that was initiated, was that initiated shortly  
9 after the directive was given?

10 A Menzenwerth would have been given that task in I  
11 would imagine the early fall of 2014.

12 Q Okay. So it is your understanding or belief  
13 that the task was given to him in the fall of 2014 but  
14 that he did not undertake it until this year?

15 A He certainly didn't complete those until that  
16 point in time, I cannot say when he undertook it.

17 Q Okay. And do you know what the delay -- why  
18 there was such a delay?

19 A I cannot imagine. It could have been various  
20 legitimate reasons, but you'd have to talk to Detective  
21 Menzenwerth regarding that.

22 Q Okay. Would that be something that would be  
23 consistent with your policy?

24 A Well, again, typically we are able to produce  
25 documents in a very timely manner; however, this was a

1           Q     All right. So with regard to -- You were in  
2     command of the incident -- You were the incident commander  
3     beginning on October 11th, correct?

4           A     August 11th.

5           Q     I'm sorry, I keep saying October.

6           A     And we talked about that, but, yes.

7           Q     And that extended to August 14th when I think  
8     the governor made Captain Johnson incident commander,  
9     correct?

10          A     One of two executive orders.

11          Q     All right. So during that period of August 11th  
12     through August 14th -- well, August 13th, you were the  
13     person in charge, right?

14          A     I shared that responsibility with Chief Jackson,  
15     and then I was fortunate enough to have Captain Johnson  
16     and either Colonel Adkins or Major Jones from the  
17     St. Louis Metropolitan police department assist me along  
18     with my commanders.

19          Q     Okay. But you were the ultimate person in this  
20     situation?

21          A     I was, yes.

22          Q     All right. So if -- The folks that were using  
23     force, there were guidelines that you all explained to  
24     them were the parameters in which force were to be used,  
25     correct?

1           Q     So you have to have a threat in order to use  
2     force, and the force continuum tells you that the amount  
3     of force that you can use decreases as the threat  
4     decreases, correct?

5           A     Yes.

6           Q     And increases as the threat increases, correct?

7           A     Yes.

8           Q     Okay. So when we talk about use of force,  
9     you're looking at the threat level, right?

10          A     Yes.

11          Q     All right. And just as with an arrest, you're  
12     looking at the probable cause for the arrest based upon  
13     the applicable law, correct?

14          A     Yes, sir.

15          Q     And an individual running along or walking along  
16     a sidewalk towards the police, no one else with him, would  
17     not fit within the category of failure to disperse, would  
18     he?

19          A     If that's all that you're giving me, then I  
20     would tell you no.

21          Q     All right. And if that person were charged with  
22     failure to disperse under those circumstances, that would  
23     not be an appropriate arrest, would it?

24          A     If that's all you're telling me, no.

25          Q     Okay. Now, in this -- in these plaintiffs, of

1       located on the corridor, but we were not happy with the  
2       prisoner processing, and we realized that it needed to be  
3       altered to where we were able to at a glance identify  
4       certain things, what was the officer's name, what was the  
5       suspect's name, what was the charges, where were they  
6       going, different things like that that we realized that we  
7       needed to do a better job of.

8           Q       So would you agree there was no standard way to  
9       document arrests?

10          A       Now, there was a standard, but what I would tell  
11       you is that we needed to get better at the standard way we  
12       were doing it.

13          Q       Okay. Now, "When people were arrested,  
14       conditions of release varied depending on the agency  
15       making the arrest."

16          A       That was true, yeah.

17          Q       All right. And in this particular case with the  
18       plaintiffs here, no documentation of any kind was prepared  
19       contemporaneously with their arrest as far as you know,  
20       correct?

21          A       Yes, I would have to depend on what you're  
22       telling me to say that, yes.

23          Q       And you have no evidence to the contrary, right?

24          A       I do not.

25          Q       All right. I'm still on 38, "There was no one

1 A Yes, sir.

2 Q And specifically Finding 19.

3 A Yes, sir.

4 Q "Law enforcement applied the 'keep moving' order  
5 broadly and without guidelines for officers that allowed  
6 for its legal application."

7 A During the day, I have already talked about that  
8 in federal court, and we should have altered the standing  
9 order on the failure to disperse, and, in fact, we did.

10 Q And so would you agree that the failure to do  
11 that led to constitutional violations?

12 MR. PLUNKERT: Object to the foundation.

13 MR. HUGHES: Yeah, and also as to particular  
14 relevance in this particular lawsuit. Are you asking did  
15 that lead to a constitutional violation of, for example,  
16 Tracey White or Antawn Harris or anyone else? I mean,  
17 there has to be some connection to this particular  
18 lawsuit, right? So is that what your question is? Are  
19 you asking him did this lead to maybe a false arrest  
20 charge of William Davis and Tracey White or --

21 MR. LATTIMER: You want me to have the court  
22 reporter read it back?

23 MR. HUGHES: Look, I made the objection.

24 MR. LATTIMER: All right.

25 MR. HUGHES: You can do what you want.

1 events, and when they happen, they can test the capacity  
2 of any police department regardless of whether they have  
3 10,000 people or 1,000 people.

4 Q And so you would disagree with the next sentence  
5 of that finding which is, "The unprecedented nature of  
6 this event does not justify the lack of documentation and  
7 need to track the use of less-lethal responses"?

8 A I think we do need to document and I do think we  
9 need to track the use of force. I'm not saying -- Are we  
10 talking about that or are we talking about time?

11 Q Well, here they're saying the unprecedented  
12 nature of this event does not justify the lack of  
13 documentation and need to track the use of lethal --  
14 less-lethal responses.

15 A I agree 100 percent.

16 Q Okay. I'm on the same page.

17 A Yes, sir.

18 Q And the next finding, "The use of canines during  
19 the Ferguson demonstrations raised many questions and  
20 concerns and the assessment team determined the following:  
21 The St. Louis County PD and Ferguson PD used canine units  
22 for crowd control to protect the homicide scene on August  
23 9th." You were aware of that, right?

24 A I was.

25 Q And did you agree with that?

1           A     Yeah, they did remove their name tags, and they  
2 did that because that was what they were trained to do  
3 prior to August of 2014. So when I was trained as a  
4 police officer, when a four-year officer has been trained  
5 as a police officer, they were told to strip all the items  
6 off their shirts, take your ties off, wear long sleeves if  
7 they have them and button the sleeves down, that way they  
8 can't -- nothing can come -- accoutrements can come off of  
9 the uniform, they're all stuck on here with needles, so  
10 that's why we did that.

11           So I didn't find that unusual when I first  
12 noticed that, because that was the way I had been trained  
13 and that's the way the police officers had been  
14 instructed. But then for whatever reason we started  
15 talking about that, I think the patrol didn't take theirs  
16 off, and then we decided as a command that it was a better  
17 idea to make sure that we had the name tags on. So I  
18 don't think we got them on right away, it was probably a  
19 week, could have been two days, I don't remember, though.

20           Q     (by Mr. Lattimer) But that's what they were  
21 trained to do?

22           A     Yes.

23           Q     Isn't that a way of hiding your identity?

24           A     I don't think that was why they were doing it  
25 that way. I don't ever think anybody was colluding to

1 say, hey, we're going to hide our identity, that's why  
2 we're going to all get trained, POST certified trained,  
3 and take our name tags off, I think that assertion is  
4 ridiculous. I think it has to do with the fact that they  
5 didn't wear -- that I was trained not to wear badges  
6 either, I mean, you just stripped all the way down with  
7 that stuff. That was the assertion made, but I can't  
8 agree with that.

9 Q How do you identify a police officer if you  
10 don't have a name tag?

11 A Well, it would be very difficult to. But it's  
12 the same way as trying to identify a police officer if he  
13 has a raincoat on or if he's wearing a suit and tie or --  
14 you know, that's something that we deal with all the time.  
15 It doesn't seem that remarkable, except in this arena then  
16 all of the sudden it was brought to the forefront.

17 Q But doesn't that prevent any individual from  
18 holding a police officer accountability who may have  
19 engaged in inappropriate conduct?

20 MR. PLUNKERT: Calls for speculation.

21 MR. HUGHES: And argumentative.

22 A I don't know what would prevent them from trying  
23 to obtain the name of a police officer.

24 Q (by Mr. Lattimer) But how do you do that, is  
25 what I'm trying to understand, if you don't have any

1 identifying markers?

2 A You could ask the police officer.

3 Q If the police officer has removed his name  
4 badge, you ask him his name and he's going to give it to  
5 you?

6 A Why wouldn't he?

7 Q Well, I'm trying to understand why would he  
8 remove it. But you told me that he was trained to do  
9 that?

10 A Yes, sir.

11 Q And you gave a reason for that. But why can't  
12 you just stitch his name with a placard?

13 A Well, because then everybody will have shirts  
14 that are stitched with placards with their names on them  
15 is one reason for that. Again, there's all sorts of  
16 mechanisms to be able to complain or begin to identify  
17 police officers, you know, you can set that up a lot of  
18 different ways. Should we have somebody come up to us and  
19 say -- and I don't think it mattered whether they had name  
20 tags or not, "Hey, this just happened to me, this officer  
21 just did that," the first thing we would always say is  
22 what color uniform were they wearing at the time, so we  
23 could begin to narrow it down. And typically we would  
24 always be able to find the officer that was being  
25 complained upon, because we knew what post they were on or

1 whatever. We weren't adverse to doing any of this.

2 But you asked me specifically about the name  
3 tags, I'm telling you why they weren't wearing the name  
4 tags, and I'm also going to tell you that in no measure as  
5 the police chief was I doing that in order to veil these  
6 names from the public.

7 Q Well, let me ask it this way: Did they wear  
8 their name tags at other times?

9 A Yeah, they wear them every day just like I am  
10 right now.

11 Q And so under what circumstances would they be  
12 told to remove them?

13 A Typically they were -- The only time I'm aware  
14 of is they were told to remove them when they were in a  
15 situation regarding a civil disturbance response event.  
16 It's been that way for my 29 years up until recently.

17 Q And the purpose of removing the name tag was  
18 what?

19 A Well, again, let's start all over. Pens, name  
20 tags, badges, service bars, whatever, the purpose -- and  
21 ties, take all that off, that way you don't have anything  
22 loose hanging on you, you're going to have equipment over  
23 the top of that, it tears stuff up, that's really why.

24 Q So would you agree that that might look  
25 differently to the public?